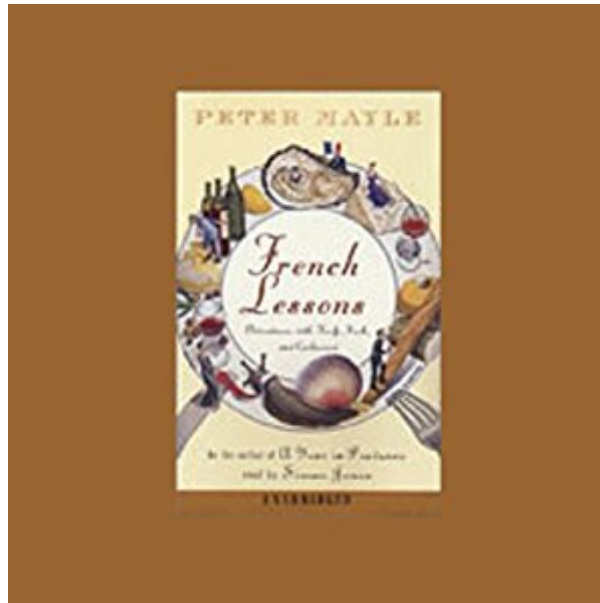




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# French Lessons: Adventures With Knife, Fork, And Corkscrew



## Synopsis

From Peter Mayle, a joyous exploration and celebration of the infinite gastronomic pleasures of France. Ranging far from his adopted Provence, Mayle now travels to every corner of the country, armed with knife, fork, and corkscrew. He takes us to tiny, out-of-the-way restaurants, starred Michelin wonders, local village markets, annual festivals, and blessed vineyards. We visit the Foire aux Escargots at Martigny-les-Bains a whole weekend devoted to the lowly but revered snail. We observe the Marathon du Medoc, where runners passing through the great vineyards of Bordeaux refresh themselves en route with tastings of red wine (including Chateau Lafite-Rothschild!). There is a memorable bouillabaisse in a beachside restaurant on the Cote d'Azur. And we go on a search for the perfect chicken that takes us to a fair in Bourg-en-Bresse. There is a Catholic mass in the village of Ri-cherenches, a sacred event at which thanks are given for the aromatic, mysterious, and breathtakingly expensive black truffle. We learn which is the most pungent cheese in France (it's in Normandy), witness a debate on the secret of the perfect omelette, and pick up a few luscious recipes along the way. There is even an appreciation and celebration of an essential tool for any serious food-lover in France, the Michelin Guide. "Here we have all the glory and pleasure of the French table in the most satisfying book yet from the toujours delightfully entertaining"--Peter Mayle.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours 45 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House AudioBooks

Audible.com Release Date: May 3, 2001

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00005KA5Q

Best Sellers Rank: #170 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Lifestyle & Home > Cooking #179 in Books > Travel > Food, Lodging & Transportation > Dining #221 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Travel

## Customer Reviews

Open this book and you're in for a fourteen course meal, which if you read it through without

stopping, might last as long as a typical Provencal lunch, about 3 hours, and you will consume about five glasses of different wines along the way as you conjure up your "Inner Frenchman" and give thanks "For What We Are About to Receive". You'll discover why Frenchmen were called Frogs by the British during the two World Wars -- it was because of their love of eating frogs, something the British turned up their noses on while the French inhaled deeply over the prospect of, as in the chapter, "The Thigh-Tasters of Vittel". Rather than sporting blue noses, the French honor their celebrated chickens in "Aristocrats with Blue Feet". Instead of overdressing for every meal like the Brits, there is a restaurant in the south of France known for "Undressing for Lunch". With cities around the world featuring a marathon run through their streets, Frenchmen converge for "A Connoisseur's Marathon" in various stages of dress and undress annually. Or you might enjoy some bobbing, weaving, and imbibing "Among the Flying Corks in Burgundy". And after stopping for boudin noir, or trying to find some, one might opt for "A Civilized Purge" at a health spa known more for its sumptuous repasts than its Spartan fasts. . . .As Mayle winds down his marathon of fourteen courses through the festivals of France, he divulges as a parting shot, the background to the famous Michelin travel directory in "The Guided Stomach". I had my first set of Michelin Radial tires on an MG TD I bought in 1972, and I wondered back then, "How did a company known for its fancy automobile tires end up making the Michelin Guide?" Now, some 38 years later, I find the answer in a book about eating and drinking -- it is a story about how the rubber hits the road.[page 208] It was 1900, the year of the first Michelin guide to France . . . It is a pocket-sized volume, this first edition, of just under four hundred tightly set, busy-looking pages, and it was given away to owners of voitures, voiturettes, and even velocipedes by the brothers Michelin. They had created the removable pneumatic tire in 1891, and the guide was their way of encouraging motorists to wear out as much rubber as possible by extending their travels throughout France. The Guided Stomach portion of the Michelin Guide was to come later, as there were no food establishments listed in the first editions of the Guide. Getting there alive back then seemed more important than getting there well fed.[page 210] Readers of that first guide were invited to write to Michelin with their comments, and they could hardly fail to have been impressed by the fund of technical and geographical information contained in the little book. But how many of them, I wonder, wrote in to ask that burning question so close and dear to any French heart at any time, but even more so after a hard day on the road. What's for dinner? Because although hotels were listed, restaurants weren't. The guide was, after all, intended to be a survival manual for motorists driving primitive machinery that frequently broke down. A man whose valves and grommets were giving him trouble could hardly be expected to give much thought or attention to a menu. Heretical though it may sound, in those early

years, mechanics were more important than chefs. As we wend our way to the end of this guided tour of Mayle's psyche, we follow him and his wife to one of the establishments still alive and cooking since that original 1900 guide. It is a hotel and restaurant in Avignon, Hotel d'Europe. [page 222, 223] Looking through the pages of the 2000 edition, you will find 116 establishments that were recommended in the original guide a hundred years ago. One of these monuments happens to be the Hotel d'Europe in Avignon, not far from us, and we thought it would be interesting to see how it was holding up under the weight of all those years. In fact, the hotel was doing brisk business long before the Michelin brothers discovered it. Built in the sixteenth century, it was acquired by a widow, Madame Pierron, who opened her doors to travelers in 1799. Bigwigs of every description came to stay: cardinals and archbishops, princes and statesmen, even Napoleon Bonaparte. History doesn't relate whether Josephine came, too, but it seems he had fond memories of the place. When he was fighting in Russia, surrounded by officers complaining about the discomforts of war, he showed little sympathy. "Sacrebleu!" he is reported to have said. "We're not at Madame Pierron's hotel." In this famous hotel, Mayle toasted all of us, including you, dear Reader, as collectively we constitute Monsieur Tout le Monde. [page 224] It had been a lovely evening, and it marked the end of a certain stage in the preparation of this book -- the end of that leisurely, enjoyable, and often well-fed process that I like to call research. A toast seemed appropriate. We drank to chefs, particularly French chefs. And then we raised our glasses again to that unsung hero of the table, custodian of the nation's stomach, and seeker after gastronomic immortality, wherever he can find it: Monsieur Tout le Monde. Let's hope he's with us for another hundred years. The "Last Course" is like the famous toast, "The King is dead. Long live the King." The next step is for Monsieur Tout le Monde, Mr. Everyman, the intrepid traveler in each of us, to walk in Mayle's footsteps through the muddy field, don a Day-Glo wig for the marathon, dodge the flying corks of Burgundy, and sleep in the Hotel d'Europe where Robert Brown and Elizabeth Barrett spent their elopement. Today the Book, tomorrow the World! The remainder of my review can be found in DIGESTWORLD ISSUE#103 by Bobby Matherne.

This is another wonderful book by Mr. Mayle. It is interesting, informative and very funny. I think some critics give Mr. Mayle the short end of the stick, as it is sometimes felt that his books are just "fluff". What's wrong with being entertaining, though? And if anyone bothers to take a careful look, Mr. Mayle is a very, very good writer. His sentences are polished gems, and I would put him right up there with the best novelists in terms of sheer writing ability. If you like France and you like food, you will like this book. Mr. Mayle travels around going to various festivals that celebrate the eating of

snails, or frogs legs, or cheese, etc. There are a couple of absolutely hilarious chapters, one dealing with the "beautiful people" being undressed for lunch in a seaside restaurant in St. Tropez, and the other dealing with going to a health spa, French style. (You have the choice between eating off of the low calorie menu or the gourmet menu. Caloric content is not given on the gourmet menu. After all, this is France!) Scoop this book up as quickly as you can and enjoy every bite. Bon Appetit!

If you are planning a trip to France this book will give you an insight into that odd, contrary, and fascinating culture of the French. I have read all of Mayle's books and consider them a guide not only for tourism but as insight into the French lifestyle. A must read, "A Year in Provence".

I'd read this book some years ago, but bought a new copy recently to give to my girlfriend. Peter Mayle is a graceful writer, and the chapters describe various places throughout France where he has attended festivals celebrating, for example, escargots or Bresse Chickens. I re-read the book with great pleasure, and found myself laughing at each page!

This is a very nice description of the French savoir fair, better than any tour guide, excellent bin appetit

This is a fantastic book! Hilarious anecdotes in Mayle's unobtrusive English style. If you love food or even if you just want to read about some ridiculously amusing French festivals and events, I highly recommend this book. It was my first Peter Mayle book but I doubt it will be my last.

Culturally there is a lot to learn from this book. You get to learn about France's unique regional festivities that concern food from the author's point of view. It makes you want to take a trip there and experience it yourself. There was only one chapter that was rather awkward just because it had to do with women's implants and 'who's who' in a certain city in Southern France. That chapter can be skipped, the rest of the book, however, is enriching and informative. I recommend it, and it's also available in French.

It was a nice diversion from our political reality show Not as good as his first book

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